

A place by the bay

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Selectmen agree to buy Blairhaven Retreat

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DUXBURY – If Town Meeting agrees, Duxbury will soon own five acres of bay-front property.

At their Monday night meeting, Duxbury selectmen put their stamp of approval on using Community Preservation Act funds to purchase the Blairhaven Retreat Center on Howland's Landing Road.

The cost will be \$3 million to purchase the property, which overlooks Kingston Bay.

Besides its scenic location, the property also includes a 2,000 square-foot dormitory a 1,700 square-foot house and a barn.

According to Community Preservation Committee Chairman Holly Morris, the committee has been eyeing the property since 2003. In fact, the town has expressed interest, she said, since the 1950s.

"This is one of the most exciting things



STAFF PHOTO/MATTHEW NADLER

If Town Meeting approves, Community Preservation Act funds will be used to buy the Blairhaven Retreat on Howland's Landing Road.

I've ever been a part of," Selectman Elizabeth Sullivan said, noting the town's long-time interest in acquiring the site.

The location is already a popular boating site with more than 100 moorings in a deep-water area, as well as a landing

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for smaller craft, Morris said.

"It's a very heavily used landing," she said, noting that it's popular to shell fishermen as well as boaters.

The plan is to use the site for passive recreation and also, perhaps, to provide off-road parking for boaters.

However, it is likely that a committee will be formed to decide what to do with the property, while "being sensitive to the environment and the neighborhood," Morris said.

Of the three buildings, Morris said, the dormitory might be taken down. Maintaining it "would be above and beyond" what the town can manage, he said.

The property is currently owned by the New Church Union, a Swedenborgian Church based in Cambridge. According to Morris, the church was no longer interested in maintaining the property.

There is also a bit of romance at 23 Howland's Landing, Morris told selectmen. According to her, a cedar tree

on the site was the place where John Alden proposed marriage to Priscilla Mullen.

Selectmen unanimously approved purchasing the property. It still requires approval by Town Meeting in March.

The board also agreed to spend \$427,500 to purchase a 29-acre parcel of land off Summer Street between Franklin and Keene streets. That piece, which abuts other conservation land, will be preserved as open space, Morris said.